

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 409

By Maddox

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Hal Holbrook upon his meritorious career on the stage and in television and film.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should salute those gifted citizens who through their inherent talents and extraordinary efforts have distinguished themselves in the performing arts as entertainers and actors; and

WHEREAS, Hal Holbrook is one such estimable professional actor who has utilized his incredible talents to the stage, where he first penned and performed *Mark Twain Tonight!* in 1954, and where he continues to perform the show today, as well as to television and cinema; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Holbrook was born on February 17, 1925, in Cleveland, but was raised mostly in South Weymouth, Massachusetts; at the age of twelve, he was sent to Culver Military Academy, where he discovered acting; and

WHEREAS, in the summer of 1942, he secured his first paid professional engagement, playing the son in *The Man Who Came To Dinner* at the Cain Park Theatre in Cleveland; that fall, he entered Denison University in Ohio, majoring in Theatre under the tutelage of his lifelong mentor, Edward A. Wright; and

WHEREAS, World War II interrupted his education and Mr. Holbrook was sent to serve in the U.S. Army Engineers for three years; and

WHEREAS, upon his return from War, he continued his education and developed his famous Mark Twain characterization which grew out of an honors project at Denison University; he and his first wife, Ruby, then constructed a two-person show, playing characters from William Shakespeare to Mark Twain, and toured the Southwest performing 307 shows in thirty weeks; and

WHEREAS, Hal Holbrook's first solo performance as Mark Twain was at the Lock Haven State Teachers College in Pennsylvania in 1954; that same year he received a steady job on a daytime television soap opera, *The Brighter Day*; and

WHEREAS, the following year, he pursued his Mark Twain character at night in a Greenwich Village night club, where he developed his original two hours of material and perfected his timing; his Mark Twain character received national television exposure via the *Ed Sullivan Show*; and

WHEREAS, in 1959, after five years of researching Mark Twain and honing his material in front of countless audiences all over America, he opened at a tiny theatre off-Broadway in New York; Hal Holbrook was an instant and shining success in portraying Mark Twain; and

WHEREAS, after a twenty-two week run in New York, he toured the country again, performed for President Dwight D. Eisenhower, and at the Edinburgh Festival; the U.S. State Department sent him on tour of Europe, during which tour he became the first American dramatic attraction to go behind the Iron Curtain following World War II; and

WHEREAS, he continued to lend his considerable talents to the theater, playing Hotspur in *Henry IV, Pt. I* at the Shakespeare Festival Theatre in Stratford, Connecticut, and Lincoln in *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* off-Broadway; and

WHEREAS, in 1963, he joined the original Lincoln Center Repertory Company in New York, appearing in *Marco Millions*, *After the Fall*, *Incident at Vichy*, and *Tartuffe*; starring roles on Broadway followed, including *The Glass Menagerie*, *The Apple Tree*, *I Never Sang For My Father*, *Man of La Mancha*, and *Does a Tiger Wear a Necktie?* with the young Al Pacino; and

WHEREAS, meanwhile, he continued with his Mark Twain show every year, winning a Tony Award for his performance in 1966, and a Drama Critics' Circle Award in 1967; CBS aired a 90-minute television special of *Mark Twain Tonight!* which was nominated for an Emmy Award and seen by an audience of 22 million people; and

WHEREAS, in 1970, he got his first Hollywood break as the star of the television program, *The Senator*, which won eight Emmy Awards; and

WHEREAS, since then, he has made fifty television movies and mini-series, has been nominated for twelve Emmys and won five for *The Senator* (1971), *Pueblo* (1974), Best Actor of

the Year for *Pueblo* (1974), *Sandburg's Lincoln* (1976), and as host and narrator of *Portrait of America* (1989); he has appeared in two sitcoms, *Designing Women* and *Evening Shade*, and has made guest appearances on *West Wing*, the sitcoms *Becker* and *Hope & Faith*, *The Sopranos*, and *NCIS*; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Holbrook's movie career began with *The Group* in 1966, when he was forty-one years old; since then, moviegoers have seen him in nearly forty films, including *Magnum Force*, *Midway*, *All the President's Men*, *Julia*, *Capricorn One*, *The Fog*, *Star Chamber*, *Creepshow*, *Wall Street*, *The Firm*, *The Bachelor*, *Waking The Dead*, *Men of Honor*, *The Majestic*, *Shade*, *Killshot*, and, most recently, *Into the Wild*, which was written and directed by Sean Penn; and

WHEREAS, he repeatedly returns to the stage, as well, with performances in New York, *Buried Inside Extra* (1983), *The Country Girl* (1984), *King Lear* (1990), and *An American Daughter* (1997); at regional theaters, *Our Town*, *Uncle Vanya*, *Merchant of Venice*, *King Lear*, *A Life in the Theatre*, *Be My Baby*, and *Southern Comforts*, the last two of which were with his wife, actress-singer Dixie Carter; and a national tour of *Death Of A Salesman*; and

WHEREAS, throughout his long and fruitful career, Hal Holbrook has continued to perform as Mark Twain every year, including his third and fourth New York engagements in 1977 and 2005, and a world tour in 1985 for the 150th anniversary of Mark Twain's birth, which tour began in London and ended in New Delhi; *Mark Twain Tonight!* is perhaps the longest running show in theater history; and

WHEREAS, Hal Holbrook has received honorary Doctor of Humanities degrees from Ohio State and the University of Hartford, an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Ursinus College, an Honorary Doctor of Letters from Elmira College, and Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degrees from Kenyon and his alma mater, Denison University; and

WHEREAS, no stranger to accolades, Mr. Holbrook received the Edwin Booth Award in 1966; the William Shakespeare Award from The Shakespeare Theatre, Washington, D.C. in 1998; was inducted into the New York Theatre Hall of Fame in 2000; and received the National Humanities Medal from President George W. Bush in 2003; and

WHEREAS, his professional accomplishments aside, Hal Holbrook is an avid sailor; he has competed in the Single-handed Transpac Race from San Francisco to Hawaii in his 40-foot sailboat, Yankee Tar, sailing 2,400 miles alone; and

WHEREAS, he has also sailed through the South Pacific to Tahiti, Samoa, the Tongas, New Zealand, and the Fiji Islands; and

WHEREAS, he is also deeply devoted to family and always remains true to family values of the highest order; he and his wife, Dixie Carter, reside in Los Angeles and Tennessee, and together have five children; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Holbrook epitomizes the spirit and dedication that are characteristic of a true Tennessean; his commitment to excellence in his profession serves as a model and inspiration to those who seek to emulate him; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly finds it appropriate to pause in its deliberations to acknowledge and applaud Hal Holbrook for his career of outstanding contributions to the stage and screen; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend Hal Holbrook, a man of great integrity and exceptional creative spirit, for his notable and praiseworthy achievements and his excellent performances on the stage and in television and cinema, congratulate him on his enduringly successful run with *Mark Twain Tonight!*, and extend to him our best wishes for every future success and satisfaction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.